

California Institute of Public Affairs InterEnvironment

P.O. Box 189040, Sacramento, California 95818
(916) 442-2472 • info@cipahq.org • www.cipahq.org
Member IUCN – The World Conservation Union

March 25, 2007

TO: Joseph T. Edmiston
FROM: Ted Trzyna, Ph.D.
SUBJECT: Nature & Wellness Project

The California Institute of Public Affairs is seeking a grant of \$4,500 to help support the first stage of a project titled Nature & Wellness.

Wellness and nature conservation are both receiving increased attention in California, but little is being done to connect them. A highly successful Australian program is demonstrating the benefits of doing so. We believe California has much to learn from the Australian model.

“Healthy Parks, Healthy People” started in 2000 as an initiative of Parks Victoria, the agency responsible for national and state parks in the state of Victoria, including nature parks in metropolitan Melbourne. The program is now being adopted by three other Australian states, at the national level in Australia, and in Canada.

Australia’s urban residents, like ours, tend to be more and more sedentary and have less and less contact with nature. Parks Victoria commissioned a survey of scientific literature which found clear evidence that access to nature can reduce stress, foster psychological well-being, boost immunity, aid community cohesion and identity, enhance productivity, and even reduce crime. (Some of the same ideas are set out by *San Diego Union-Tribune* columnist Richard Louv in his recent book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*.)

Based on these scientific findings, Parks Victoria:

- Launched a media campaign aimed at increasing public awareness of the benefits of experiences in nature, including — but going well beyond — outdoor exercise.
- Formed partnerships with the state’s medical societies, health associations, and health agencies. Through these partnerships, posters and brochures are distributed to general practitioners’ offices statewide, and information is provided to mothers of new babies about the benefits of experiences in the natural environment.
- Is working to build social capital, for example, by engaging more closely with local communities and involving more volunteers in park programs.

An online article posted at www.InterEnvironment.org/pa/senior.htm summarizes the scientific findings and describes the history and results of the program.

In the initial stage of this project, we will:

- Set up a small project steering committee representing both health and conservation interests in California. The committee will include you or your representative.
- Host a visit to California on April 22-23 by Gerard O’Neill, a senior official of Parks Victoria, who will be coming to the U.S. to speak at a conference in Minneapolis.

Mr. Joseph T. Edmiston
March 25, 2007
Page 2

- Hold an invitational meeting at the State Capitol in Sacramento with Mr. O'Neill to learn about Victoria's experience and explore what can be done along the same lines in California. Invitees, to be selected with your advice, will be senior representatives of state and local government, as well as medical, health, and conservation associations and foundations.
- Prepare a plan for follow-up, including funding for later stages of this project, which are likely to include a broader convening process aimed at action by state and local government and the nonprofit sector, including health foundations.
- Submit a brief report to SMMC/MRCA on results.

CIPA has convened similar projects on California issues since the mid-1970s. Since 2003, CIPA has been leading an effort under the auspices of the World Conservation Union to increase the ability of the conservation community to improve the lives of city dwellers while strengthening protection of nature within cities and in larger ecosystems. Background is posted at www.citiesandconservation.org. CIPA is a 501(c)(3) California charitable trust.

This project will be led by Elisabeth Kersten (CIPA Senior Associate; formerly Director, Senate Office of Research, California Legislature), and Ted Trzyna (CIPA President and Senior Adviser, Cities and Conservation, World Conservation Union).

The \$4,500 requested is budgeted as follows:

- In-state travel and subsistence, O'Neill and Trzyna (O'Neill's travel to California will be paid for by his agency): \$1,100
- Meeting expenses: \$600
- Toward staff time: \$2,800

Please let me know if you need further information.